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SUBJECT: RESULTS OF USG CLIMATE CHANGE DELEGATION VISIT TO  
HANOI

REF: STATE 234320

1. SUMMARY: On September 12, 2003, a delegation of U.S. government climate change and energy officials, led by Dr. Harlan Watson, Senior Climate Negotiator and Special Representative, OES, had a short but full schedule in Vietnam, including a variety of government meetings and public diplomacy events. Meetings with Vietnamese government officials were productive and provided additional insights regarding strategies for addressing the climate change issue nationally and in the region. Despite some criticism concerning the U.S. rejection of the Kyoto Protocol, the delegation was able to move the conversation beyond that difference of opinion in order to discuss positive initiatives of the U.S. government. END SUMMARY

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Government Meetings  
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2. Ministry of Science and Technology: Dr. Watson and the climate team met with the Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) Dr. Bui Manh Hai. Watson and Hai exchanged views and general information on national climate change priorities. The Vice-Minister expressed interest in pursuing joint research and other potential cooperation opportunities with the US. Watson emphasized the continuing US commitment to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), outlined significant new US investments in climate science and technology, and underscored the importance that the US places on international cooperation in the area of climate change. With respect to US science initiatives, the Vice-Minister took particular interest in observation and monitoring. In that context, he highlighted the beneficial ongoing cooperation between the US National Weather Service and the Vietnam Hydrometeorological Service in the fields of hydrometeorology and weather forecasting. In addition, the Vice-Minister took note of the upcoming US-GOV Science and Technology Meeting (November 2003) and suggested that the subject of climate change be added to the agenda. Dr. Watson agreed to consider the proposal, concurring that the S&T meeting might provide an opportune venue for further discussion of climate change issues and potential areas for collaboration.

3. Ministry of Industry: The US team met with Mrs. Dang Phan Thu Huong, Deputy Director, International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Industry (MOI), as well as with two other representatives from MOI. Mrs. Huong underscored the Vietnamese commitment to the Kyoto Protocol, but also expressed interest in finding other avenues to work together with the US in areas where our climate interests converge. Dr. Watson presented an overview of US climate policy, highlighting USG emissions reductions strategies and the GHG intensity approach. The conversation and questions focused largely on a discussion of the US GHG intensity approach. Ms. Susan Wickwire, US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), presented information on voluntary programs. Dr. Rick Bradley, US Department of Energy (DOE), offered a brief summary of US technology initiatives, concentrating on US-led international efforts including carbon sequestration and hydrogen.

4. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment: Dr. Watson and the climate team engaged in a roundtable discussion with representatives of the Vietnamese Climate Change Interagency Working Group (including MONRE, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Centre for Natural Sciences and Technology, and the Hanoi University of Technology). The talks were lively and productive, giving both sides a chance to present and debate certain aspects of their national climate positions. In his opening presentation, Dr. Watson provided the group with background on US national circumstances (from demographics to our energy profile) and explained President Bush's climate policy. In particular, Watson emphasized the US commitment to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), outlined our GHG intensity approach, and underscored our efforts to advance the science and technology of climate change - including significant investments in major S&T and R&D initiatives.

Ms. Wickwire, EPA, presented information on voluntary programs designed to encourage private sector efforts to reduce GHG emissions. Dr. Bradley, DOE, outlined USG long-term climate initiatives with a focus on technology and R&D activities. He placed particular emphasis on USG efforts in the areas of hydrogen and carbon sequestration. The GOV queried the USG at length with respect to the GHG intensity approach and its connection to Kyoto Protocol targets and absolute GHG emissions reductions. Following a healthy debate and elaboration of US national circumstances, participants agreed that the dialogue had been constructive and that continued bilateral engagement and promotion of international cooperation would be a key aspect of ultimately resolving the global climate change problem.

15. The climate team also called on MONRE Vice-Minister Dr. Nguyen Cong Thanh. The Vice-Minister underscored Vietnam's interest in climate change and welcomed the USG's effort to exchange information. He considered Vietnam vulnerable to climate change and expressly encouraged the advancement of all joint US-GOV work on both mitigation and adaptation. The USG welcomed recent efforts within the UNFCCC to increase the focus on adaptation. Both sides agreed that it was important to continue to exchange information as well as to increase international attention to adaptation issues. Watson highlighted the importance of finding ways to cope with climate change that would allow for economic growth, especially in developing countries. In particular, he discussed the USG emphasis on advancing the science and technology of climate change. Watson suggested that an increased focus on technology be incorporated into the UNFCCC process. He highlighted the importance of going beyond short-term approaches to think ahead about longer-term efforts to resolve climate change. Dr. Bradley, DOE, provided the Vice-Minister with a very brief explanation of major US technology initiatives, including US interest in promoting long-term international cooperation in the areas of sequestration and hydrogen. Ms. Wickwire, EPA, explained the US voluntary program approach as trying to harness the power of the marketplace to achieve environmental objectives, including the reduction of GHG emissions.

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Public Diplomacy Events  
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16. The Embassy Public Affairs Office convened a press event for 13 media representatives from local and wire services, including Reuters-Hanoi. Some of the questions were off-topic, including a question concerning Agent Orange, but the majority of the discussion focused on issues such as (i) determining the U.S. climate mission's purpose, including whether the U.S. was trying to convince Southeast Asia of an alternative path to the Kyoto Protocol, (ii) a discussion of the GHG intensity approach vs. the Kyoto Protocol approach, and (iii) a number of questions about U.S. initiatives and programs. Once again, we found that there was little accurate information about U.S. climate policies and that this event was a good first step in explaining to Southeast Asian audiences the robust series of U.S. climate programs.

17. Public Affairs Officer Tom Carmichael hosted a reception at his home for key players in the Vietnam climate community. The reception was well-attended by a good cross-section of government and NGO representatives, providing a valuable opportunity to further communicate President Bush's climate policy message and allowing the U.S. technical experts an additional opportunity to talk more in-depth about their program activity with their Vietnamese interlocutors.

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EPA's Side Meetings ON Energy Efficiency Projects  
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18. EPA official Susan Wickwire met her counterparts at the Vietnam Energy Conservation Program (VECP) and the Vietnam Cleaner Production Center (VCPC) to discuss potential follow-on activities to the successful joint EPA-Vietnam Climate/Ozone Office workshop held in September 2002 to promote energy efficiency (EE) and ozone protection. One promising project would address improving the efficiency of coal-fired boilers in textile plants. VECP is affiliated with the Ministry of Science and Technology and is responsible for overseeing a Global Environment Facility (GEF) project that relates to small and medium enterprises. The textile sector has been identified as one of the primary targets for EE improvements under the project. VCPC has worked with the textile sector through an ongoing UNEP-funded program. Discussions with both organizations yielded new insights into the priorities of textile manufacturers (primarily VINATEX, the state-owned major player) and into the ways in which similar projects have been implemented in Vietnam. Next steps will include follow-up communications to determine whether there is a clear basis for cooperation with VECP and to a lesser extent, VCPC. EPA will work

closely with the Embassy, USAEP, and officials at the Climate/Ozone office (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment) to ensure that activities are coordinated with other environmental projects in Vietnam.

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Conclusion  
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19. As the last leg of a three-country Southeast Asian tour (including earlier visits to Thailand and Malaysia), the discussions held in Vietnam concluded a regional outreach effort by the climate delegation. The extremely positive dialogue, the level of interest, and the overall constructive engagement experienced in each of the three countries confirmed the importance of expanding U.S. outreach efforts on climate to the broader developing country community. As part of a multi-track approach the U.S. has been working to establish formal bilateral climate partnerships with 14 priority countries, including both developed and developing countries, which together with the U.S. represent 75% of current GHG emissions. However, in addition to a focus on these priority partnerships, the U.S. has become increasingly cognizant of the need to expand its efforts to get the President's climate policy message out to all countries. There is clearly a continuing public diplomacy need to explain that the U.S. is committed to a robust series of programs and a serious climate policy, outside the context of the Kyoto Protocol. Given the President's direction on long-term climate policy objectives and investments, this visit to SE Asia served to confirm the importance of working proactively to expand the policy dialogue to countries with growing emissions, especially to those who either can or potentially could play an important role in future multilateral negotiations.

BURGHARDT